

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-19 (Canceled)

20. (Currently Amended) A fixed center die module having a rear end and a front end for use in an extrusion apparatus through which molten material is continuously extruded to form a tubular structure, wherein said fixed center die module comprises a tubular member having a uniform inner circumference extending along said central longitudinal axis and a plurality of raised surfaces extending from said tubular member, said plurality of raised surfaces forming a partial outer surface of said fixed center die module and providing a plurality of passages between said plurality of raised surfaces, said partial outer surface exhibiting a frusto-conical configuration tapering inward from said rear end to said front end ~~is configured~~ such that said the molten material continuously extruded therethrough is divided into a plurality of separate and equal portions.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently Amended) The fixed center die module of claim 20, wherein said fixed center die module further comprises a diverter for distributing the molten ~~molten~~ material through said plurality of passages to uniformly divide the molten material into a plurality of separate and equal portions and provide a balanced flow of said molten material.

23. (Previously Presented) The fixed center die module of claim 22, wherein said diverter distributes said molten material to a first set of passages wherein said molten material is divided into two separate and equal portions, and subsequently urges said molten material in said first set of passages to a second set of passages wherein said two separate and equal portions are subsequently divided into four separate and equal portions.

24. (Canceled)

25. (Canceled)

26. (Currently Amended) The fixed center die module of claim 20 wherein said outer surface of said fixed center die module is configured to mate ~~cooperates~~ with an inner tapered surface of an extrusion die head to provide a balanced flow of said molten material.

27. (Previously Presented) The fixed center die module of claim 26, wherein said fixed center die module is configured to evenly distribute and coat said molten material onto a cylindrical body issuing from said tubular member.

28. (Canceled)

29. (Canceled)

30. (Previously Presented) The fixed center die module of claim 20 wherein said extrusion apparatus is a crosshead extruder.

31. (Canceled)

32. (Canceled)

33. (Previously Presented) The fixed center die module of claim 21 wherein the configuration of said fixed center die module precludes the need for continuous die adjustment to achieve predetermined cross-section and uniform wall gauge concentricity of said tubular structure.

34. (Currently Amended) A fixed center die module for use in a crosshead extrusion apparatus through which molten material is continuously extruded to form a tubular structure, wherein said fixed center die module ~~is exhibits a frusto-conical shape~~ configured to slidably mate with a tapered interior wall surface of a crosshead ~~an~~ extruder housing, said ~~aid~~ fixed center die module comprising:

a rear end;

a front end;

a tubular member having a uniform inner circumference and an outer outer surface along its longitudinal axis;

a plurality of raised surfaces integral with and extending from said outer surface of said tubular structure, said plurality of raised surfaces forming a partial outer surface exhibiting a frusto conical configuration tapering inward from said rear end to said front end of said fixed center die module;

a plurality of passages between said plurality of raised surfaces, said plurality of passages including a first set of passages through which molten material is uniformly divided into two separate and equal portions, and a second set of passages through which said two separate and equal portions are uniformly divided into four separate and equal portions of molten material to provide a balanced flow of molten material; and

a diverter integral with and extending from said outer surface of said tubular member for distributing said molten material to said plurality of passages, wherein said fixed center die module is configured to preclude the need for continuous die adjustment to achieve said balanced flow of molten material to an extruder die head in the manufacture of a tubular structure having a pre-determined cross-section and uniform wall gauge concentricity.

35-42 (Canceled)